

**CITIZENS
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FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



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Empowering Communities. Advocating Solutions.

Testimony in Support of HB 5392
Testimony by Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Louis W. Burch, Program Coordinator

March 4, 2014
Hartford, CT

Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan, distinguished members of the Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Louis Burch, program coordinator for Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE). Supported by over 80,000 members in Connecticut and New York State, CCE works to empower communities and advocate solutions that protect public health and the natural environment. CCE would like to offer the following testimony in support of House Bill 5392:

HB 5392-AAC THE DISPOSAL AND COLLECTION OF UNUSED MEDICATION

Flushing unwanted or unused medication has been a common disposal practice, despite the fact that sewage treatment plants, septic systems, and drinking water infrastructure are not designed to treat or remove these contaminants. Research points to several potential health concerns, including hormone disruption, antibiotic resistance, as well as potential synergistic effects from interactions with other medications. Studies have revealed impacts to aquatic wildlife including: feminization of male fish when exposed to hormones (birth control) and reduced fertility due to exposure to anti-depressants and beta blockers. A nationwide study done in 1999 and 2000 by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) found low levels of drugs such as antibiotics, hormones, contraceptives, and steroids in 80% of the rivers and streams tested.

Connecticut should promote the safe disposal of unused and expired medication, while preventing adverse impacts of pharmaceuticals in the environment. State-run pharmaceutical collection events have proven to be popular and effective, but are infrequent and may not be widely accessible to all residents of the state. By implementing a comprehensive program to collect and dispose of unused and expired pharmaceuticals across the state, Connecticut residents will have a consistent and secure alternative to flushing unwanted medications- a practice which has become commonplace in the absence of formal drug disposal policies. An educational component at the point of sale would be necessary to help inform the public about the new law, and provide individuals who take prescription medication with the locations of disposal sites in their area.

CCE supports the concept of this bill, which is to set up a statewide pharmaceutical disposal system of secure drop boxes to remove unused and unwanted pharmaceuticals from the wastewater stream. As written, however, the bill may contain onerous stipulations that are not necessary to ensure effective management of this waste stream. In particular, provisions requiring unused medications to be disposed of at a bio-medical waste facility are unnecessary and may, in fact act as a barrier to passage of this legislation. **CCE recommends amending this provision to require disposal at any EPA compliant incineration facility.**

On behalf of our members in Connecticut, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and look forward to working with you on this important issue.